DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 292 072 CS 009 076

AUTHOR Leach, Mozelle P.
TITLE Effectiveness of a Language Arts Tutoring Program as Perceived by the Elementary Students.
PUB DATE Nov 87
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (16th, Mobile, AL, November 11-13, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Black Students; College Students; Educational Research; Elementary Education; Higher Education; *Language Arts; Program Evaluation; Rural Education; Rural Youth; *Student Attitudes; Student Motivation; Teacher Education; *Tutorial Programs
IDENTIFIERS Mississippi State University; Stanford Achievement Tests

ABSTRACT

In order to investigate the efficacy of a decade-long language arts tutoring program, a study compared students' responses to a survey of their participation in and attitudes about the program with their Reading, Language, Math, and Total scores on the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) and other tests. The tutoring program assigned college students from a language arts practicum course at Mississippi State University to work on a one-to-one basis with elementary school children from a rural black school. Analyses of the responses of the 85 subjects (grades 7, 8, and 9) revealed significant positive correlations between: (1) the number of semesters spent in the program and scores in Reading achievement; (2) earlier times of entry into the program and higher Reading and Total scores; (3) student responses that their tutors helped them do better work and scores in every achievement area; (4) responses that the tutoring helped most with "feeling good about school," and Reading, Language, and Total scores on the SAT; (5) responses that the sixth grade was the best grade to have tutoring in and scores in Research Skills; and (6) responses that the program caused students to consider attending college and spelling achievement. Since a strong correlation existed between what the children said about the program and school achievement in years following the program, it is clear that the program provides long lasting beneficial results. (A table of data and a survey form are attached.) (ARH)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED292072

# EFFECTIVENESS OF A LANGUAGE ARTS TUTORING PROGRAM AS PERCEIVED BY THE ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mozelle P. Leach

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

by

Mozelle P. Leach
Mississippi State University

Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, November 10-13, 1987.

CS009076



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# EFFECTIVENESS OF A LANGUAGE ARTS TUTORING PROGRAM AS PERCEIVED BY THE ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

## INTRODUCTION

For the past decade, elementary aged children in a rural black Mississippi school have been tutored by Mississippi State University students enrolled in Language Arts Practicum courses. Tutoring has been done in all elementary grades.

The elementary children work with the same tutor once a week for a semester. Informal assessments of the academic levels and needs of the children help the tutors plan specific lessons addressing the needs of the students being tutored. Taking time to get acquainted with the special interests of the children helps the tutors plan sessions particularly addressed to incorporating those interests into the structure of assessed academic needs. Besides these special activities that give the children both academic improvement opportunities and also take into consideration the interests of the children, these sessions provide personal interaction with an adult who has one full hour of undivided attention to give. An hour of an adult's undivided attention is impossible in the regular classroom, and improbable in most any situation. The children have talked freely with the tutors, and have found out what college students from other areas and other social structures are like. The relations developed have, in many instances, continued past the semester. Much has been accomplished during the years of the program.

## BACKGROUND FOR STUDY

At a time when so much criticism is being directed toward both public schools and teacher training institutions, any program which helps negate even a part of that criticism should be studied. A program which positively affects both public school students and preservice teachers should be carefully studied.

Some of the effects of the tutoring situation on the tutors have already been studied. One of the most important changes has been the change seen in undergraduates who received a "hands-on" practicum that enabled them to adjust their perspectives of theory and practice, when those perspectives at the beginning of the semester were compared with their attitudes regarding the same perspectives at the end of the semester (Leach, 1979). From the rank ordering of ten objectives at the beginning of the semester, to the rank ordering of the same objectives at the end of the semester the undergraduates considered the objectives concerned with personal responsibility, self-reliance, and self discipline to be of much greater importance by the end of the practicum experience.

Another study (Leach, 1981) examined the relationship of the changes in the course objectives as they relate to changes in attitudes toward five major learning or developmental theorists (Jerome Bruner, B. F. Skinner, Jean Piaget, Jean J. Rousseau, and

Robert N. Gagne'). Results of this study indicated that students are moving from a theoretical viewpoint on learning to a more practical viewpoint, as they see the need for structure and discipline in planning for successful lessons. As they come into contact with children, the judgements they make indicate a questioning of viewpoints that had heretofore been academically accepted, but as yet untried.

## NEED FOR PRESENT STUDY

After reviewing these studies, which emphasize the effects of the semester's tutoring on the tutors involved in the study, a study examining the attitudes of those who had been tutored was planned. No earlier study had been considered, because the parents of the children involved in the tutoring voiced their feelings about having their children tested. They felt that testing results might be used in a negative manner. The years of positive reception given to the program by the children have resolved any reservations that parents had had earlier. It was felt that asking for the attitudes of the children would in no way arouse earlier parental reservations. Therefore, a one page survey was developed, and permission to submit the survey to students in grades seven through twelve was requested and granted.

The one page survey, (Addenda I) consisted of ten items. The first item asked if the students had participated in the program. One hundred forty six (146) students in grades seven through twelve gave an affirmative response to that question. The study was first planned using as subjects all students who responded affirmatively to the first item. However after studying responses to other questions

on the survey, permission to compare responses to grades made on end-of-year achievement scores was requested. Permission for such comparisons was granted at meeting of the Oktibbeha County School Board in September, 1987.

After examining scores recorded at the end of the year, an arbitrary decision was made to limit this study to the survey responses of seventh, eighth, and ninth graders. Those students were administered a Stanford Achievement Test which yields both a grade equivalent score and a scale score. Since the scale score can be compared across grade levels, it was decided to use scale scores for this study. No comparable scores are available for higher grade level students. Therefore, the study was limited to the eighty-five students for whom such scores are available.

## RESEARCH PROCEDURES

After the Survey (Addenda 1) had been developed, and permission to administer it was granted, seventh, eighth, and ninth graders in the school where the tutoring takes place were asked to answer the survey questions. Subjects for this study were the eighty-five students who gave an affirmative answer to the question asking whether they had been in a class where tutoring was done by the Mississippi State University students.

When the results of the survey had been tallied, permission to compare these results to achievement scores made by the eighty-five subjects near the end of the school year was requested. Such permission was granted at a regular monthly meeting of the Oktibbeha County School Board.

## STATISTICAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY

After the results of the study had been compiled, they were statistically treated to examine and compare the totals for each of the items in the survey with the Stanford Achievement Test, the standard battery test routinely administered to most students enrolled in Mississippi schools. Scale scores established by the Stanford Achievement Test are in Reading, Language, Math, and the Total for the battery. Scale scores are also established for Research Skills and for Spelling.

Since the purpose for the study was to examine the degree of relationship between the variables determined by the survey and the variables established by the scale scores of the Stanford Achievement Test, the statistical treatment selected was Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient. Results are given for the following questions from the survey:

## ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Ater statistical treatment, the following items were significant at the .05 level of confidence:

Item 1: How many times (semesters) were you in classes where the Mississippi State University people worked?
(Answers ranged from (1) One semester, through (5) More than four semesters.

This item correlated with reading achievement at the .05 level of

confidence. The more semesters students were involved in the program, the higher the score was in reading achievement.

Item 2: What grade were you in the first time you worked with these classes?

(Answers ranged from grades one through six.)

This item correlated at the .02 level with READING, and at the .05 level of confidence with Total Battery Score. The earlier the grade level at which the student became involved in the program, the higher the scores in those two areas.

Item 3: Did you think the people who came to work with you really helped you do better work?

For those who answered YES on this question, correlation was at at the .05 level for every achievement area that produced a scale score.

Item 4: Choose the answer which tells where the class helped you most: Reading, Writing, Math , Feeling good about myself, Feeling good about school.

For those who chose "Feeling good about school," correlation was the .05 level of confidence for Reading, Language, and Total Battery.

Item 5: When asked the best grade to have the tutoring in, the selection of the sixth grade correlated at the .05 level of significance with Research Skills. When the choice of the sixth grade as being the best to work with is compared to the item which shows that

the earlier the children are involved in the program the more effective the work is, the apparent contradiction may be a result of the students' short term memory in thinking that the last semester they were involved in the program was the best, when in truth the earlier the involvements the more effective it was.

Item 6: Being in a class with University tutors made me think more often about going to a college or a university.

For students answering YES to this question, correlation was at the .05 level of confidence for spelling.

While it seems important to see survey results that indicated that students who are thinking about college attendance at the seventh, eighth, and ninth grade levels have higher levels of spelling ability than their peers, the results of this item imply a practical significance of even greater importance. Sixty-nine of the eighty-five students involved in the survey indicated that they are thinking about going to college. When the enrollment of black students in colleges and universities has declined steadily since 1976, dropping by as much as 11 percent between 1975 and 1982 (Garibaldi, 1987), a study which shows that approximately 81 percent of the black students surveyed are thinking of college. indicates a positive trend. About fifty-six percent of those surveyed specified that they were thinking of attending Mississippi State University.

## IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

While it is true that those subjects who had more than four semesters (Item I) had more help with reading instruction than

subjects with help ranging through four semesters, the language interaction with at least five University tutors may have been of far greater importance than the weekly reading instruction that probably never lasted as long as twenty five-minutes. The tutors were frequently reminded that they were not to regard the tutoring sessions solely as reading lessons. If those being tutored had problems with reading, the tutor should talk informally with the child to see if the child's problem might be the result of a language misunderstanding, or of an inadequate mastery of the language needed for understanding that which the child was asked to read. This informal language exchange is more like a social interaction than a teacher-student conference over the failure of a reading lesson could usually, if ever, be. Since the tutor is less judgemental about the student's work than a teacher is apt to be, and the student is probably less inhibited with tutors than with teachers, they are usually able to communicate freely.

The importance of this language exchange would be difficult to overrate, since it serves at least three of the most important functions of language (Klein, 1981). Klein stresses language as an important mode for the transmission of information, and in self-expression, language as a critical part of individuality. The third, and possibly the most important, function of language is that it assists in cognitive development. Much research over the years points to language in social interaction as critical to cognitive development. Of especial importance is the work done by Vygotsky in studying the importance of social communication, in the developing child, and its relationship to development of advanced cognitive skills (Vygotsky, 1962,1978).

In its "Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts," the National Council of Teachers of English emphasizes the need for viewing English as process and activity, as well as a body of knowledge. Teaching English and language arts as process and activity requires the building of student-centered, interactive classroom environments. Rich and varied oral language experiences offer students opportunities to understand how language serves their own needs, just as it affects their environment. Providing these opportunities for language experiences should help the children understand the relatedness of many aspects of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. "Skillful use of language may be the single most important means of realizing the overarching goal of education to develop informed, thinking citizens" (NCTE Guide, 1986).

The study showed that not only did the children benefit from the increased number of semesters (Item I), the earlier they got into the program (Item II), the more beneficial it was. For those entering the program in the first grade, there was statistical significance at the .05 level of confidence for Reading, and for the Total Battery Score.

For Item III, the children surely gave the program a vote of confidence, since only two of the eighty-five children said the program did not help, and one of them told what it helped most with! This item showed statistical significance with all Stanford Achievement scale scores.

When asked what the program helped most with, (Reading, Writing, Math/Science, Feeling good about myself, and Feeling good about school), some changes had to be made. The scale score for Language was

used in place of Writing. Since the Stanford Achievement Test yields no score for Science, only the math score was used. Significant items for this question were for the ones who said the progam made them feel good about school. Correlations were significant at the .05 level for Reading, Language, and the Total Battery. It is interesting that while the subjects for the study gave credit to the program for helping them feel good about school, one hour of tutoring a week surely could not change the attitudes of children if they really disliked school. Teachers who work with the children involved in this study must be credited for the work they regularly do with their students, but credit also is due to the tutors who talk positively about being in school of their own choice.

## CONCLUSIONS

Since there is such a strong correlation with what the children say about the program, and school achievement in the years following the program, there seems no doubt as long lasting beneficial results for them. As teacher educators work to bring more relevance to programs for training young teachers, a program that is effective in promoting higher levels of learning for both students and teachers-in-training should be examined carefully. The ideas of this program may be adapted for other institutions to help children in their areas.

Table I

| | | Reading | Language | Math | Total | Research | Spelling |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of semesters | r | .19 | .05 | .11 | .06 | .09 | .09 |
| | p | .05* | .32 | .16 | .31 | .21 | .20 |
| Grade first participating | r | .23 | .16 | .14 | .19 | .12 | .15 |
| | p | .02* | .08 | .10 | .04* | .13 | .08 |
| Did tutoring help | r | .19 | .21 | .22 | .24 | .28 | .23 |
| | p | .04* | .03* | .02* | .01* | .00* | .02* |
| Helped most with: | | | | | | | |
| Reading | r | .00 | .01 | .18 | .07 | .00 | .02 |
| | p | .50 | .44 | .05* | .26 | .48 | .43 |
| Language | r | .01 | .16 | .14 | .13 | .04 | .16 |
| | p | .47 | .17 | .10 | .11 | .34 | .07 |
| Math | r | .12 | .10 | .11 | .12 | .04 | .05 |
| | p | .14 | .18 | .15 | .13 | .36 | .30 |
| Feeling good about myself | r | .07 | .08 | .03 | .04 | .04 | .04 |
| | p | .24 | .21 | .38 | .34 | .34 | .34 |
| Feeling good about school | r | .25 | .21 | .10 | .20 | .06 | .17 |
| | p | .01* | .03* | .18 | .03* | .29 | .06 |
| First feelings | r | .14 | .18 | .08 | .14 | .10 | .16 |
| | p | .10 | .05* | .23 | .09 | .18 | .44 |
| Best grade | r | .05 | .13 | .15 | .03 | .20 | .01 |
| | p | .34 | .11 | .08 | .40 | .04* | .43 |
| Children want to be included | r | .04 | .05 | .05 | .05 | .04 | .04 |
| | p | .36 | .33 | .32 | .36 | .35 | .35 |
| Want to go to college | r | .02 | .04 | .17 | .07 | .00 | .20 |
| | p | .44 | .36 | .06 | .26 | .49 | .03* |
| Want to go to MSU | r | .08 | .06 | .12 | .11 | .06 | .03 |
| | p | .22 | .30 | .13 | .16 | .28 | .40 |

Top number: Correlation coefficient
Bottom: Probability

* Significant at .05 level

Total number of cases: N = 85

ADDENDA

Name _____ Grade _____

Please answer these questions as carefully and as truthfully as your memory will let you. Circle the very best answer to each question.

1. Were you ever in a class that Dr. Leach and the Mississippi State University students took part in?

   Yes No

2. How may times were you in classes where the MSU people worked?

   1 2 3 4 More than 4

3. What grade were you in the first time you worked with these classes?

   1 2 3 4 5 6

4. Did you think the people who came to work with you really helped you do better work?

   Yes No

5. Choose the answer which tells where the class helped you most:

   A. Reading
   B. Writing
   C. Math or Science
   D. Feeling good about myself
   E. Feeling good about school

6. The first time you knew you were going to be in the Language Arts class, how did you feel about it? Choose the best answer.

   A. I was really afraid to be in it.
   B. I did not think I would like it.
   C. I didn't really care whether I'd be in it, or not.
   D. I thought I might like it.
   E. I was very happy to know that I would be in it.

7. The very best grade to have the Language Arts Class work with is:

   1 2 3 4 5 6

8. Most of the children in grade school want to be in the Language Arts Class.

   Yes No

9. Being in the class with University tutors made me think more often about going to a college or university.

   Yes No

10. Being in the class made me want to go to Mississippi State University when I am old enough for college.

    Yes No

# BIBLIOGRAPHY


Garibaldi, Antoine M. "Quality and Diversity in Schools: A Case for an Expanded Pool of Minority Teachers." Xavier University of Louisiana. July, 1987.

Klein, Marvin L. "Key Generalizations About Language and Children." Educational Leadership, Journal of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. March 1981.

Leach, M. "Changes in Course Objectives Observed in Preservice Elementary Teachers after Participation in a Language Arts Practicum." Paper presented to Mid-South Research Association, November, 1979.

Leach, M. "A Study of Changes in Course Objectives and Their Relationships to Changes in Agreements with Learning Theory Generalizations." Paper presented to Mid-South Research Association, November, 1981.

National Council of Teachers of English. "Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts," NCTE Stock Number 47305. Urbana, Ill. NCTE, 1986

Vygotsky, L. Mind in Society. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Mass. 1978.

Vygotsky, L. Thought and Language. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1962.